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NEWS RELEASE

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON LAW PROFESSOR HELPS SHAPE U.N. RESPONSE TO RACISM

DAYTON, Ohio — Racial inequality in health care persists in the United States despite laws against racial discrimination, contends a University of Dayton law professor who is developing reports for two United Nations' groups.

When the U.N. holds its World Conference Against Racism, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa, in August, Vernellia Randall's input may help shape the agenda.

The University of Dayton law professor, who is an expert in health care law, is working with nongovernmental organizations to develop a report for the United Nations Committee on the Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). While the U.N. holds hearings on the official U.S. government report this winter, Randall is working to help craft a "shadow" document — a report from nongovernmental organizations that highlights key violations or challenges in the United States regarding racial discrimination.

"The need to focus specific attention on the racism inherent in the institutions and structures of health care is overwhelming," she says. "Minorities are sicker than white Americans; they are dying at a significantly higher rate. These are undisputed facts."

She attributes the disparity to the lack of a national health care system and barriers to hospitals, nursing homes and physicians for many minorities.

Randall is working with two NGOs, International Possibilities Unlimited and the Allied Research Center, to develop a health care agenda on race, a topic on which, she acknowledges, "I'm an established presence." For example, at the invitation of the U.N. Research Institute for Social Development, Randall will travel to South Africa in August to present a paper on

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“Regulating Racial Discrimination in Health Care and Human Experimentation.”

Randall and Lorraine Anderson, a colleague from Physicians for Human Rights, have already submitted a paper to the regional preparatory meeting for the Americas for the World Conference Against Racism. The paper asks the conference to “acknowledge that racism is a major health determinant for indigenous peoples, people of African descent and other racially marginalized groups” and calls for the eradication of racial discrimination in health care. A copy of the statement can be read at

<http://www.udayton.edu/~health/09HumanRights/wcarhealth.htm>

Randall says the official U.S. government report, the first submitted since the United States ratified the U.N. Convention on Eliminating Racial Discrimination in 1994, “is misleading, since the government report puts things in the best light.” The report is available here: <http://www.udayton.edu/~race/06internat/hrights/USCERD2000/>

The United States “signed on as a non-self-executing treaty, meaning the treaty has no force of law in the United States. We have no obligation to follow the treaty if it conflicts with our law.”

Legally, health care organizations and providers should no longer discriminate, but “the problem is our laws are inadequate and don’t deal with institutional and structural racism,” Randall says. “Our laws exempt some forms of racial discrimination.”

Although “for many people health care is not one of the more pressing issues” when they consider racism, Randall believes it’s crucial to get health care topics on the international radar screen. “Policies that have the purpose or effect of producing unequal access to health care systems or producing racial and ethnic biases in the diagnosis and treatment of racial minorities are policies of racial discrimination,” Randall maintains.

The U.S. government report on CERD can truthfully point out that, unlike some countries, the U.S. has outlawed most forms of legal discrimination. However, according to Randall, health care discrimination is still pervasive, and she draws this analogy: “When I tell my son to clean his room and he complains, ‘Why do I have to? My room is cleaner than my brother’s,’ I say, ‘That may be true, but that’s not the point.’”

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For media interviews, contact **Vernellia Randall** at (937) 229-3378 or randall@udayton.edu.